

## REMARKS

This application has been carefully reviewed in light of the Office Action dated January 6, 2006. Claims 1, 2 and 4 to 16 remain pending in the application, of which Claims 1, 7 and 12 are independent. Reconsideration and further examination are respectfully requested.

Claims 6, 11 and 16 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph. Specifically, the Office Action alleged that the phrase “a period of the type of agreement instruction window displayed by the external computer” The foregoing phrase has been amended to make the subject matter thereof even clearer and therefore, withdrawal of the rejections is respectfully requested.

Claims 1, 2, 5, 7, 8, 10, 12, 13 and 15 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) over U.S. Patent No. 5,383,129 (Farrell), and Claims 4, 6, 9, 11, 14 and 16 were rejected under § 103(a) over Farrell in view of U.S. Patent No. 5,956,698 (Lacheze). Reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejections are respectfully requested.

The present invention relates to calculating a charge for image processing apparatuses. According to the invention, a variety of unit prices per paper sheet, and a type of maintenance agreement, are stored in a memory together with an identifier of an image forming apparatus. To determine the charge, a number of printed paper sheets output by the image forming apparatus and the identifier of the apparatus are received, and a payable amount is calculated based on (i) the number of printed paper sheets and (ii) the unit price of the variety of unit prices associated with the identifier of the image forming apparatus. As a result, the invention provides a way to determine how much to charge a customer for

an image forming apparatus (such as a network copier) based on how much the copy machine is used and the type of maintenance agreement.

Turning to specific claim language, amended independent Claim 1 is directed to a remote managing system for managing plural image forming apparatuses and plural types of maintenance agreements relating to the image forming apparatuses, comprising a receiver that receives information of a number of printed paper sheets output by an image forming apparatus, together with an identifier of the image forming apparatus, via a communication path, a memory that stores a variety of unit prices per paper sheet to be output by each of the image forming apparatuses, wherein each of the variety of unit prices is associated with an identifier of an image forming apparatuses and a type of maintenance agreement for the image forming apparatus, and a calculation section that calculates a payable amount for use of an image forming apparatus having the identifier on the basis of (i) the number of printed paper sheets received by the receiver, associated with the identifier and (ii) a unit price of the variety of unit prices, stored in the memory, associated with the identifier and the type of maintenance agreement for the image forming apparatus.

Amended independent Claims 7 and 12 are method and computer medium claims, respectively, that substantially correspond to Claim 1.

The applied art is not seen to disclose or to suggest the features of the present invention, and in particular is not seen to disclose or to suggest at least the feature of receiving a number of printed sheets by an image forming apparatus, together with an identifier of the image forming apparatus, and calculating a payable amount for the image forming apparatus based on (i) the number of printed paper sheets associated with the

received identifier, and (ii) a unit price of a variety of unit prices stored in a memory, associated with the identifier and a type of maintenance agreement for the image forming apparatus from among a plurality of maintenance agreements.

Farrell merely discloses estimating a cost of printing material used to print a job on a printing apparatus. According to the method, a first quantity of printing materials to be used in printing a job is selected and then a first printing cost of the job is calculated for executing the job. Farrell is not seen to teach that a variety of unit prices per paper sheet to be output by an image forming apparatus are stored in a memory with an associated identifier of the image forming apparatus. Moreover, Farrell is not seen to teach that the memory also stores a type of maintenance agreement in association with the identifier. Therefore, Farrell simply does not calculate a payable amount for the image forming apparatus based on (i) the number of printed paper sheets associated with the received identifier, and (ii) a unit price of a variety of unit prices stored in a memory, associated with the identifier and a type of maintenance agreement for the image forming apparatus from among a plurality of maintenance agreements. Accordingly, Farrell is not seen to disclose or to suggest the features of the present invention.

Lacheze is not seen to add anything that, when combined with Farrell, would have overcome the foregoing deficiencies of Farrell. In this regard, Lacheze is merely seen to disclose a system for billing a user of a copying machine based on accounting information. However, Lacheze is not seen to disclose or to suggest anything that, when combined with Farrell, would have resulted in the feature of receiving a number of printed sheets by an image forming apparatus, together with an identifier of the image forming apparatus, and calculating a payable amount for the image forming apparatus

based on (i) the number of printed paper sheets associated with the received identifier, and (ii) a unit price of a variety of unit prices stored in a memory, associated with the identifier and a type of maintenance agreement for the image forming apparatus from among a plurality of maintenance agreements.

In view of the foregoing amendments and remarks, the entire application is believed to be in condition for allowance and such action is respectfully requested at the Examiner's earliest convenience.

Applicants' undersigned attorney may be reached in our Costa Mesa, CA office at (714) 540-8700. All correspondence should continue to be directed to our below-listed address.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'E. Kmett', is written over a horizontal line.

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